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JORDAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II (JTD II)

WOMEN IN TOURISM – *ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
TOURISM*

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JORDAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II (JTD II)

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**WOMEN IN TOURISM – *ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
TOURISM***

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ACRONYMS

ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
BDS	Business Development Service
CBO	Community-Based Organization
COM	Council of Ministers
DCA	Development Credit Authority
DOA	Department of Antiquities
DOS	Department of Statistics
GAM	Greater Amman Municipality
HRDC	Human Resource Development Corporation
IBLAW	International Business Legal Advisors
ILO	International Labor Organization
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
JHTEC	Jordan Hospitality and Tourism Education Company
JITOA	Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association
JOHUD	Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development
JRA	Jordan Restaurant Association
JRF	Jordan River Foundation
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MTA	Madaba Tourism Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTS	National Tourism Strategy
NTVS	National Tourism Visitors Survey
PDG	Program Development Grant
PSP	Private Sector Participation
RFP	Request for Proposal
RSCN	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSC	Strategy Steering Committee
TDC	Tourism Development Corporation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTC	Vocational Training Center

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important sector and a significant contributor to Jordan's Gross Domestic Product. It has been identified as one of the priority sectors due to its potential to create economic growth and generate employment.



The sector, however, is facing many challenges in terms of professional work-force availability and gender discrimination. The challenges lie in the lack of proper education, social and cultural attitudes that strongly and negatively discriminate against female employment. These forces continue to hinder formal female labor market integration undermining efforts to alleviate poverty, and the social and economic empowerment of women.

Perceptions of women as homemakers are often found closely associated with women's labor participation rates. Views on traditional gender roles appear to be formed by women and men when young and strongly influenced by religious and culture ideology. These attitudes are particularly concentrated and enforced in tourism-related employment. Although the role of policy with respect to cultural and religious ideology is likely to be controversial, Practice shows a smooth transition starting with elementary education can break the stereotypes gradually and eliminate any discriminatory attitudes towards women in employment.

'Perceptions of women as homemakers are associated with labor participation rates.'

This report, therefore, focuses on women's role and employment in the tourism sector. The norms, laws and social values of society are highlighted as major challenges of how women accept and are accepted as formal participants in the tourism sector. By acknowledging and addressing these issues, action can be taken by all involved stakeholders to better promote the role of women in the labor force in general and tourism sector in specific.

The purpose of this report is to establish a baseline in order to guide efforts in the following:

- (i) Breaking gender stereotyping and misconceptions about tourism-related jobs, by increasing the awareness of the role that women can play in this sector and creating a gender sensitive environment.

- (ii) Establishing a framework to monitor the performance of tourism as a tool for women empowerment, and accordingly set an action plan to involve women effectively.
- (iii) Increasing awareness of the potential impact of tourism industry in terms of job creation and economic livelihood. Increased public awareness can also serve as a reminder of Jordanian hospitality traditions.
- (iv) Highlighting the role of education, training and vocational training as a tool for empowering women in the workforce.
- (v) Draw emphasis on women's employment, entrepreneurship, education, leadership and production in the field of tourism.

This report is organized as follows; section 1 explains the potential of tourism as an economic empowerment tool. Section 2 provides a brief on the standpoint of women in education and training. Section 3 explains the role of women in the workforce, tourism sector in particular. Section 4 highlights the challenges that hinder women's employment in the tourism industry. Section 5 offers preliminary recommendations for stakeholders' considerations, and the last section highlights the stance of women in tourism today.

The report was prepared with reference to the following literature:

- USAID (2009). *'Public Awareness and Attitudinal Research of Tourism in Jordan'* Amman, Jordan.
- Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) (2009) *'Insights into Gender Dynamics in Marginalized Urban Communities in Jordan'* Amman, Jordan.
- USAID /JTD (2003) *'Human Resources Development Plan 2003-2006'*. Amman, Jordan
- Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) – *Tourism Statistics* 2008
- Department of Statistics, Jordan, 2008

SECTION 1: TOURISM AS A FACTOR IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Tourism is Jordan's second largest industry, contributing to 14 % of the country's GDP in 2009. Number of arrivals has increased from 6.5 million in 2007 to 7.1 million in 2009. The country welcomed around 3.6 million tourists in 2010, which brought in JD 1.09 million worth of tourism receipts (USAID JTDP). Today, the industry employs around 39,000 direct employees and expects to employ a total of 64,000 in the next 5 years. It is evident that tourism in Jordan is significant for two reasons: its great potential to create economic growth and to generate employment.

It is fair to say that tourism in Jordan is entering a new era, and in many respects businesses are now operating in uncharted territory, particularly in the areas of attracting, developing and retaining staff. Tourism is experiencing growth after a period of contraction and uncertainty. Both the public and the private sectors are working intensively to attract and cater for increasing tourism activity. A number of large scale investment projects are under way, leading to a future expansion of the accommodation sector and related tourist infrastructure.

However, the industry still lacks recognition of its true value to the economy by both the public at large as well as policy makers. They recognize the industry as one of the important economic sectors but not its full potential in terms of job creation and community development. A survey commissioned by USAID Jordan Tourism Development Project (USAID JTD), revealed that all Jordanians recognize the importance of tourism on the economic growth of the economy in general but do not recognize the true economic credentials of the industry in terms of job creation and career prospects for individuals.

Employment in the sector is often stigmatized by families deeming it too liberal and not fit for women, or as an industry inferior to other “more prestigious” professions for males. This has resulted in the sector's inability to attract sufficiently skilled or trained employees. Often, employment in the sector is the choice of last resort. The industry itself seems not to have been a ‘goodwill ambassador’ either. It is still perceived as a weak sector in terms of offering a professional ‘career’ or job security.

14%

Of Jordan's GDP is attributable to the tourism sector



Women working in room service at a hotel - Amman

SECTION 2: WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is a priority for a young nation like Jordan, lacking natural resources to invest in human resources. In recent years major reforms in the education and training system (general education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education) have been introduced mainly to target unemployment, poverty alleviation and most importantly increase the participation rate of women in various sectors of the labor market.

Education and training play a major role in determining the number of candidates available for employment and their qualifications and expertise. As stated in an ETF on 'Women and Work in Jordan' report, it has been observed that labor force participation rates increase with rising levels of education and training; therefore, highlighting the interconnection between these two sectors. Moreover, the report revealed that, in general, the more education an individual acquires, the greater is their income potential. Hence, statistics and figures about the level of education amongst Jordanians will be highlighted in this section to better understand the contribution of women in the labor market.

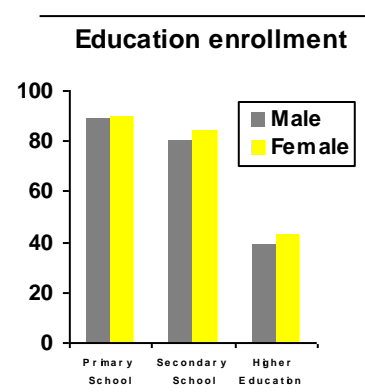
'Labor force participation rate increases with rising level of education & training'

Women vs. male education

According to the ETF report, adult women in Jordan remain slightly less educated than men, although the gender gap in educational attainment is quickly disappearing among younger cohorts. Primary enrolment rates are high reaching 90% for women and 89% for men in 2008 (UNESCO). Statistics show that Jordan has one of the highest literacy rates in the region for both genders. Figure 1 shows men vs. women enrollment in different levels of education.

More Jordanian women attended secondary school than men - 84% compared to 80% (UNESCO). Most education in Jordan, especially at primary and secondary levels, remains single-sex education - a reflection of cultural sensitivity towards co-education. Although this helps to attract and keep females in school, it may affect both men's and women's ability to handle mixed situations in the workplace later in life.

There are also more women than men in higher education in Jordan, giving gross enrolment rates of 43% and 39% respectively in 2008 (UNESCO). Almost two thirds of students in the University of Jordan are women, as they are more likely to attend public universities than men. People still perceive academic programs as more prestigious and the choice to enroll in technician and vocational training in community colleges remains secondary or a last resort after academic programs.



Academic programs are perceived as the most prestigious, so when more places are made available in university education, fewer female (and male) students are interested in enrolling in technical programs in community colleges.

In higher education, women usually major in education and teaching, social sciences, humanities and religious studies, while men have tendency to major in scientific and technical subjects such as mathematics, computer science, engineering and medicine.

Vocational Education & Training

The Ministry of Education provides vocational education as part of its comprehensive secondary schools in grades 11-12; the Ministry of Labor provides workforce training through the VTC; and the Ministry of Higher Education provides post-secondary non-tertiary educational programs, as well as tertiary professionally oriented programs through the community colleges (coordinated by Al-Balqa University).

A vocational career is often not an attractive option for students for both social and economic considerations and therefore many students opt for general and academic education rather than vocational or technical stream. Furthermore, vocational education and training programs that accommodate women remain few, and social restrictions on labor market participation further discourage their enrollment in such programs.

The participation of women in vocational education and training varies greatly between the three main types of provider: community colleges, VTC programs and apprenticeships. The majority of women education is concentrated in universities. Only 30 women were enrolled in hospitality programs offered by comprehensive secondary schools in 2008 constituting 2 % of total students



Women attending classes in vocational training centers – Salt.

There has been a dramatic fall in the general women enrolment rate, probably as a result of the increased intake at Jordanian universities. On the other hand, women participation rate in VTC programs increased significantly from 6% in 2001 to 27% in 2006.

2%

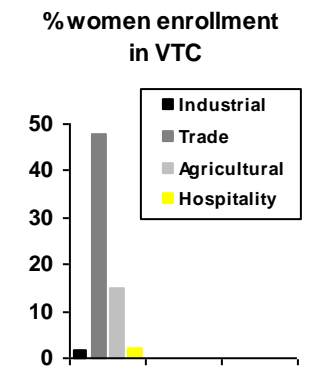
Of students in hospitality programs are women

The increase in the proportion of female students is attributed to the expansion of VTCs offering new programs that are attractive to female students such as information technology, personal services and secretarial work. Regarding apprenticeships, in 2006 the most popular fields of study chosen by females were information technology, personal services and secretarial work.

According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, women constituted 1.5% of students in industrial vocational education and 48% in trade and 15% in agricultural vocational education in 2008 (DOS, 2008).

Gender stereotyping in school textbooks and teachers' attitudes highly influence students' perceptions of some types of jobs. The potential of schooling and textbooks in particular to promote gender equality and break these stereotypes especially about tourism-related jobs - is believed to be not fully exploited.

'Gender stereotyping in school textbooks is a powerful tool to influence student's perceptions of some types of jobs'.



Students graduating from JAU (a college of hospitality and tourism) – Amman

SECTION 3: WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE

*'Tourism is a vehicle for gender's equality and women empowerment'
UN WOMEN Global report*

Considerable efforts have been given towards women's education and their participation in primary and higher education as well as vocational education; whilst these efforts were successful, women remain under represented in various sectors of the labor market. In macroeconomic terms, this under representation in the labor market means under utilization of productive capacity, hence, economic growth, as women clearly show potential for productivity. In social terms, the fact that fewer women earning a formal wage undermines efforts to reduce poverty, this in turn works against their economic and social empowerment and hammers their ability to achieve their full potential. It is, therefore, critical that women's participation in the economic activity increases, to yield the benefits at both micro and macro levels.

Women's labor force participation rate remains very low in Jordan compared to counterpart nations. The activity rate in 2008 was 73.9% for men and 23.3% for women according to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2008). Although the enrolment of female at some educational levels still lags behind that of males, this educational gender gap however, is too small to explain why females are significantly lagging in labor force participation, underutilizing the skills and qualifications of women in Jordan.

It is therefore worthwhile to explore and address the reasons behind this discrepancy and whether this partially reflects women's own attitudes to lag behind in the work force, or there exist external forces that discriminate against women, in particular tourism-related employment even though they have the necessary education and skills.

This sheds light on legal provisions governing gender equality. The Jordanian constitution proclaims equal rights; however, the laws regulating private affairs like marriage, divorce and inheritance treat females and males differently. This has implications on the participation of females in the labor force especially that the constitution doesn't provide a framework that penalizes those who discriminate against women, particularly in the private sector. Also, with some exceptions, women are prohibited from working during the night, between (7p.m. and 6a.m) limiting their potential employment opportunities, especially in the field of tourism. This further enforces the stereotypes surrounding such types of jobs.

23.3%

**Women participation
rate in the labor force.**

***'Some legal
regulations reinforce
the notion that
women's work is
secondary'***

Some legal regulations also reinforce the notion that women's work is only secondary which acts as a disincentive for married women to join the work force. For example, women in the public sector are not entitled to receive family allowance if the fathers of their children are alive and fit for work ¹.

Women in tourism

In 2008, Jordanian women accounted for 10 % only of all employees in the tourism sector compared to a 49 % global average in hotel and restaurant employment (MoTA 2008). They constitute 11% of hotel employment and only 9% of restaurant employment. Conversely, according to the survey, women make up 49% of all employees in travel agencies. Finally, survey revealed that 24% of all the companies do not employ any women - 61% of them are restaurants, 6% of travel agencies and 2% of hotels.

As mentioned earlier, tourism industry has been seen as an unacceptable employment option for women. Some aspects of the tourism sector however, is seen as more acceptable such as working in handicrafts. Government jobs in tourism administration sub sector are also attractive among women.



Woman working in handicrafts – Ajloun

10%

Of employees in the tourism sector are women

15%

Is the global average

Foreign Employment

Jordan has around 40,000 officially (more than 60,000 unofficially) registered women migrant workers. Majority comes from South and South East Asia, mostly Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Many of them occupy jobs in the tourism sector, especially when local women are reluctant to engage in such employment. At the same time employers are encouraged to hire immigrant women because they are less expensive than local labor and more flexible. Again, this puts the spotlight on labor law pursuant to employment of foreign women workers in various sectors. Labor law is a powerful tool in influencing the participation of women in the labor force; current law appears to help undermine their participation

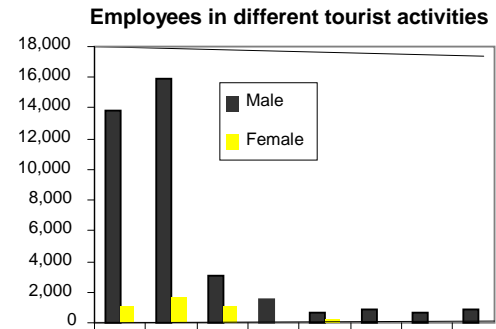
'Labor law is a powerful tool in influencing the participation of women in the labor force'

Statistics show that foreign workers constitute some 7% of all employees in the industry. Women account for some 22% of all foreign workers, especially in hotels; almost 20% of all females in the hotel sector are foreigners, compared to 5% of male employees. Foreigners constitute 8% of

¹ Article 41 of the 2001 Social Security Law No. 19

all tourist restaurants' workers, and they are predominantly men.

Figure (right) shows participation levels of women in different tourism activities (hotels, tourist restaurants, travel agencies, rent-A-car agencies, tourist shops, tourist guides, hoarse-back riding guides, Tourist transportation, and diving centers respectively), within the tourism sector compared to male participation.



The distribution of female employees according to departments reveals that women constitute 19 % of staff in sales and marketing, 22 % in administration, 25 % in maintenance and 19 % in finance. Only 13 % are working in reception and room department and 10 % in bars & restaurants

Therefore, it can be concluded that regardless of the increasing number of educated women in Jordan, the unemployment gap still exist. This can be explained by several issues mainly pertaining to culture norms and values, mismatching between the needs in labor market and the provision of skills, and the preference of foreign workers over local workers at many instances.



**Female working at the front desk
in a 5 star hotel - Amman**

SECTION 4: WOMEN IN TOURISM – THE CHALLENGES

Discrimination observed in the Jordanian labor market against women when job placement and task allocation are based on gender rather than merit. Society's attitudes often reflect the statement that 'Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for a full pay'. Society therefore, expects a woman to conform to her gendered role as a housewife, rather than pursue a successful career of her choice.

'Being a housewife is as fulfilling as working for a full pay'

Culture

It is evident that culture is the major influencer to why women are not encouraged to work in the tourism sector. The Jordanian society emphasizes the role of women as caretakers in the private sector, which is reflected in the exit rates of women from the labor market after marriage. Women are expected to set their husbands and their family as a priority. Women define themselves mainly in relation to their marital status, and they take their role as wife and mother as central to their identity and more important than any productive or community role. Many women, therefore, quit their job after marriage as they find it difficult to balance work and their family.

65%

Another challenge that women encounter with work is the unavailability of adequate opportunities. While the activity rates of higher-educated women can reach as high as 65%, women with lower skills are much less likely to enter the labor market as non-professional jobs are often considered inappropriate for women by society.

Of highly skilled women, are employed, much less rate among lower skilled women.

Sexual Harassment

In addition, sexual harassment was cited by young women as a serious problem in the workplace that discourages them from getting involved in mixed cultures. Some research suggests that sexual harassment and intimidation of women by their male colleagues and superiors is quite common (Al Manar, undated). Even sporadic instances of sexual harassment may create an unfriendly atmosphere where women feel unwelcomed or threatened. At the same time women do not report cases of sexual harassment in fear of being blamed and accused by the society.

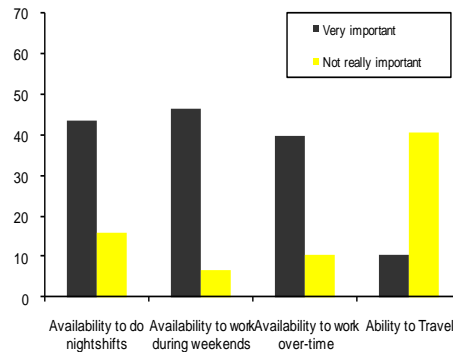
'Sexual harassments is a serious problem in the work place discouraging women from getting involved in mixed cultures'

Higher cost of employing women

Some employers still do not support the idea of employing women, believing their employment creates organizational problems and is costly due to legal provisions. Moreover, employers are aware that women cannot take on certain tasks or timetables such as night shifts or overtime that are inconsistent with the general perception of women's roles. Employers from

the industry deem characteristics such as availability to work nightshifts, weekends and over-time as very critical when hiring as the nature of the job requires employees to be flexible. Therefore, employers prefer to hire men as they show more flexibility in terms of commuting, working schedules and hours.

Figure (left) shows what characteristics employers rate as important when hiring. Moreover, employers highlighted certain issues that they have experienced with women in the workplace in a survey conducted by the ETF. 60% of employers agree that it is difficult to find women with the qualifications and skills their companies need, 50% of employers think that women create organizational problems for companies, and 43% find it difficult for the company to provide transportation for female employees. Also, 38% think that it is too expensive to employ women because of legal provisions, and 31% think that it is difficult to employ married women. Furthermore, 38% think women looking for jobs have unrealistic expectations about the job they may acquire.



Employers Perceptions

Employers' attitude towards female employment has changed over the past decade although gender crossover has stalled a bit. Stereotypes surrounding women employment clearly influence employer's decision to hire women frequently based on the nature and conditions of the work. Traditionally the resistance is observed in sectors such as agriculture, construction, transport, trade and production (DOS 2008), mainly less prestigious jobs that require travel, unsocial working hours, and direct interaction with strangers such as tourism jobs, which creates shortages in workforce in these sectors.

Today, the gender employment gap maybe diminishing, but the discrepancies in wages paid to men and women in equivalent jobs still exist. For example women are paid less than men especially in the public sector. On average women are paid JD 1.6 per hour while men are paid JD 2.1 (DOS 2008).

Employers continue to state that regardless of the flexibility characteristics they require from their employees, they tend to agree that women in the workplace can bring many positive elements.

60%

Of employers agree that it is difficult to find qualified and skilled women.

JD 1.6/HOUR

Paid to women in public sector

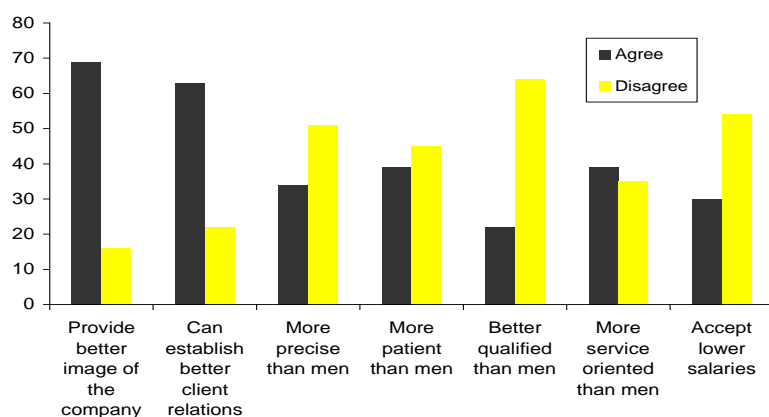
JD 2.1/HOUR

Paid to men

Employers quite disagree with the statements that women are less committed to their job than men or that they perform worse than men. Interestingly research doesn't confirm a prevalence of negative stereotype about women from employer's perspectives.

Employer's perceptions differ considerably among subsectors. Statistics show that employers from restaurants are the most likely to negatively assess women's performance and commitment. They often assume that men do not want to work with female colleagues (33% compared to 14% in hotels and 10% in travel agencies) or that customers do not like to be served by women (20% compared to 8% and 4% in hotels and travel agencies respectively). They are four times as likely to say that a restaurant is not an appropriate place for a woman to work.

However they are less likely to complain about financial liabilities related to employing women. Employers from the hotel sector were reasonably positive about employing women. Only 13% stated that hotels are not an appropriate workplace for women. Few admitted that discrimination against women on the part of male employees and customers exist. They were, however, most likely to agree that it is difficult to find women with appropriate skills. Employers from the travel agency sector were least likely to witness or exhibit any prejudice towards women, although they were likely to say that employing women can sometimes create organizational problems or increase the financial burden on the company.



Finally, responding to a question on the advantages of employing women, 49% of employers strongly agreed or quite agreed that women improve the image of a company, 63% stated that women establish better relations with clients and 49% think that women are more service-oriented than men. Employers tend to agree less with the statement that women will accept a lower salary than men or that they are more qualified than men. Other advantages of employing women stated by employers explain that they are better organized and create a friendly working environment. Figure (above) demonstrates what characteristics are favorably rated by employers.

When asked about the types of incentives they would like to see for hiring women, employers mentioned sharing the costs for training (21%), subsidizing salary for the first year (16%), supporting awareness-raising programs (7%), supporting part-time work, and sharing the cost of nurseries and covering maternity leave (5% and 3% respectively). Figure above summarizes the results of the survey.

SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS TO MITIGATE ISSUES AFFECTING WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM

This section offers some preliminary recommendations for stakeholder's considerations. Obstacles such as stereotypes about tourism-related jobs for women cultural norms and values (negative images of working women) inadequate institutional infrastructure, financial liability on employers, and working culture (sexual harassment by male colleagues, long working hours and difficulty balancing work and family life), all undermine the participation of women in the work force. Specific obstacles are also related to poor proficiencies and lack of social skills among female labor force.

In order to be able to promote education, training and labor market policies that also tackle inequalities, it is essential to better understand the complicated mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequalities in the labor markets. All relevant stakeholders; government, education system, employers, social partners, NGOs, civil society and the media can join forces and get involved to overcome the obstacles and harness the potential opportunities. Many of the actions proposed below might also be organized and financed within the framework of donor interventions.

It can be observed that while the majority of employers are not prejudice against women's work and perceive women employment as value added, social and cultural norms are the main force defining and limiting employment opportunities of women.

Therefore, it is recommended to:

- Organize media awareness-raising campaigns that would further break the stereotype of working women in the tourism sector. These campaigns should also promote positive images or success stories of women in other non-traditional fields or functions. This could be addressed by civil society but also by the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education, enforced using platforms as TV and social media, to ensure a maximum no. of outreach.
- Influence mindsets via education. Further reform of curricula and textbooks should involve presenting positive images of working women in hotels, restaurants and other tourism-related jobs.
- Organize career guidance early at school level and provide information in equal measure to male and female students on the full range of occupations available. Some studies show that the school to work transition period tends to be difficult and, which provides a perfect opportunity in promoting the integration of women in the work force and tourism jobs in specific.

'It is essential to understand the mechanism that perpetuates gender inequalities in labor markets beforehand'

- Encourage girls and women, through career guidance, to consider non-traditional study fields and vocational programs (and skilled worker jobs in the sectors where such demand exists, such as tourism).
- Target specific mentoring at female graduates leaving the education system, including social skills training and specific training on how to look for a job, prepare for an interview, etc. Training in communication skills, assertiveness skills, intercultural issues, problem-solving skills and work ethics could also be integrated into curricula or provided by civil society or NGOs in school premises.
- Improve practical training (including internships in enterprises), exposing women to different aspects of potential work environment (methods, equipment, work environment and culture, including gender-mixed environments). This requires creating incentives for better school and business cooperation and better school management, and initiative on the part of teachers.
- Include in career guidance (or curricula by content and mode of instruction) the fostering an entrepreneurship spirit in girls, as this improves work performance and quality of life in general. This is especially useful for women, who are traditionally expected to remain passive and are now more likely to occupy positions requiring certain entrepreneurial skills, such as in sales and marketing.
- Focus on empowering women in the sector economically through designing demand driven competitive edge for women.

SECTION 7: WOMEN IN TOURISM TODAY (UPDATED)

As efforts continue to promote tourism, educational attainment, and mainstream gender, employment rates remain very low among women. Today, female participation in the tourism sector shows only a slight improvement over the last year (slightly above 11%).

In fact, the number of females working in tourist restaurants dropped by few, but increased or remained the same in other tourist activities (MoTA, 2011). Today, only 44 out of 988 tourist guides are women and 1,230 out of 15,083 are females working in hotels. On the other hand, the number of women enrolled in vocational training reaches 30 % up from zero in 2007.

The growing attainment levels of women and the high rates of female unemployment and non-participation in the labor market is a serious waste of resources invested in women's education and awareness. The situation demonstrates a limitation for women to pursue personal fulfillment, utilization of capabilities, and contribution to their family's well being. In a broader sense it hampers economic growth in the country. This doesn't imply that investing resources in tourism education and awareness should be terminated, but rather redistributed efficiently and effectively.

According to a UNDP report, 5 % of MSMEs (Micro, small and medium enterprises) in Jordan are owned by women, currently there are 113 micro-enterprises in Jordan. In an issue of the Jordan times, Jacinta Barrins, *UNDP country deputy* explains that "Although 5 % is a very small compared to global average of 23-32 percent, is it considered as a very good start". MSMEs provide perfect opportunities for women to find jobs and earn revenue in their own governorate without having to move to the city, and offer an opportunity to alleviate poverty in rural communities beyond the city. Encouraging funding of such initiatives can increase the employment rate of women especially among tourism related projects.



Woman working in pottery from her home – Salt

As employers are more aware of the potential benefit that can be harnessed from the increase participation of women in the tourism sector, greater efforts should be done to equip women with skills to facilitate their successful integration in the labor force market. Strengthen their legal position and protection by amending some aspects of labor law pursuant to women employment in the tourism sector, and encourage funding of tourism related home owned businesses, this can be attained through aligning the joint efforts of all stakeholders in the industry.

11%

Is the percentage of female employment today.

Key figures Now

- Women enrolled in vocational training reach 30 % up from 0 in 2007.
 - 8 % people working in hotels are women.
 - 5 % of tourist guides are women up from 1 % in 2007.
-

5%

Of Micro- SMEs are owned by women

According to a global report by UN Women on 'Women in Tourism', jobs in this sector offer perfect opportunities for women in particular where tourism-related jobs can often be done at various different locations such as workplace, community and household, especially convenient to women. Also, it offers an opportunity to alleviate poverty in rural communities

While many societal factors may inhibit women from pursuing a tourism-related education and career, society should also acknowledge the power of the tourism industry to change lives, build communities and to lift women out of poverty, eliminate discrimination and break stereotypes. Keeping in mind that promoting women's access to higher education remains the primary policy instrument to foster gender equality in the labor market

'TOURISM HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES, BUILD COMMUNITIES AND LIFT WOMEN OUT OF POVERTY'